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SOURCE Neue Zuercher Zeitung, No 2673, 1949CONSUMERS' GOODS SCARCE, COSTS HIGH IN BELGRADE

According to information obtained in Belgrade, office workers in that city are entitled to the following food rations for the month of December 1949: one kilogram of sugar, 2 kilograms of meat, one kilogram of fat, 10 kilograms of bread, 2.375 kilograms of corn meal, 100 grams of coffee, one piece of soap (125 grams).

The rations for ordinary manual workers are somewhat larger: 11.25 kilograms of bread, 1.1 kilograms of sugar, 2.5 kilograms of meat, etc., while rations for heavy workers show further increases. However, the regular distribution of these rather ample rations is not assured. At times an entire month's fat ration is not obtainable and coffee rations seldom can be distributed. Potatoes are also controlled, and indications are that during the winter of 1949 - 1950 20 kilograms per person will be issued. Coal rations are very scant; one ton per household is to be issued to the people of Belgrade and it is not even certain that this commitment can actually be met in all instances.

Rationed foods are sold at low prices, but prices for nonrationed goods sold on the free market are exorbitant. Eggs (subject to great fluctuations in price) currently are 22-25 dinars apiece, with the average monthly wage of a worker 3,000-4,000 dinars. Fresh vegetables are expensive and obtainable only in season; the same applies to fruit.

Many persons in Belgrade prefer to turn in their ration cards and have their meals at cooperative mess halls, where for 900 dinars per month they receive two meals a day, which are ample in quantity although of low fat content.

Textiles and shoes can be purchased with coupons at prices somewhat within reach, but few coupons are issued and rationed goods are frequently entirely unsatisfactory as to quality. Prices in the open market are so excessive that it is a wonder any sales are made at all. Concerning other unrationed consumers' goods, assortments are poor, quantities scant, and prices

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very high. An ordinary radio selling for 11,000 dinars, or the equivalent of 3 or 4 months' wages, can be obtained only after a long waiting period. Such articles as combs, safety pins, etc., are unobtainable or can be bought only in the black market, which must not be confused with the legal free market. Ordinary wine which cost 2 dinars per liter before the war, when monthly wages averaged 800-1,000 dinars, today sells for 65 dinars.

The only exception to the general scarcity and high cost of consumers' goods is cigarettes, which, since tobacco exports to Czechoslovakia were stopped, sell for 9 dinars per package of 20.

The foregoing figures represent prices in Belgrade. Some products are cheaper or more readily obtainable in other parts of the country. Matches, for example, are extremely scarce in Belgrade at present and often are not available for days at a time, while in Sarajevo they can be procured in unlimited quantities. It is the general impression that the supply situation is even tenser in the provincial districts than in the capital.

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